



Blaina Partnership

Blaina Communities First Partnership Board
Working Together for a Better Future



KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

In the 2009/10 financial year
Blaina Communities First worked
with over **50** groups and
organisations, securing

£809,000

of external funding for the local
community.

That's an average of over
£67,400 Per Month!

The equivalent of **£377** for every
household of Blaina!



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Blaina Communities First Partnership Board
The Centre
77 High Street
Blaina
NP13 3BN

Helen Madden – Co-ordinator, Ceri Jones – Development Officer
Adam Cox – Youth Co-ordinator, Nicola Breeze - Support Officer

Tel: 01495 291694
Fax: 01495 294021





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Our Partners

1st Blaina Scout Group
274 Squadron Air Training Corps
Abertillery Comprehensive School
Awards For All
Blaenau Gwent 50+ Network
Blaenau Gwent Adult Education
Blaenau Gwent Boxing Club
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Service
Blaenau Gwent Social Services
Blaina Bowls Club
Blaina Bowls Club
Blaina Community Centre
Blaina Cricket Club
Blaina Heritage Action Centre
Blaina Institute
Blaina Ladies Bowls Club
Blaina Marketing and Events Group
Blaina Methodist Church
Blaina Regeneration Group
Blaina RFC
Blaina Senior Citizens Group
British Legion
Buzz Bikes
Care and Share
Change 4 Life
Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Communitas 2.0
Communitas First Trust Fund
Community Facilities and Activities Program
Community Foundation in Wales
CSV Action Earth
Cwmcelyn Angling club
Cwmcelyn Tenants and Residents
Ebbw Fach Creative Club
Ebbw Fach Trail
Families First
Green Earth
GAVO
Gwent High Sherrif's Fund
Heads of the Valleys Programme
Heritage Lottery Fund
Homstart Blaenau Gwent
Keep Wales Tidy
Linc-Cymru
Llais y Goedwig
Llys y Efail Tenants and Residents Association
Monday Dance Club
Monmouthshire Building Society Charitable Foundation
Nantyglo & Blaina Chamber of Trade
Nantyglo & Blaina Charter Group
Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council
Nantyglo Communitas First
O2
PALS Club
Prince's Trust
Riverside Fund
Rock School
Rural Regeneration Unit
Six Bells Communitas First
St Peter's Church
Street Games
Switch.uk.com
Tai Calon
The Conservation Foundation
The Mimics
Tredegar Central, West and Sirhowy Communities First
Unity
Unltd
Valleys Healing & Life
Victoria Street Allotments
Welsh Rugby Union
Westside & Forgeside Tenants and Residents Association
Ystruth Ladies Hall
Ystruth primary School



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Our Partnership

Chair Garth Collier
Vice Chair Lydia King
Treasurer Alun Lewis

Community Members

Derek Bound
Maureen Gay
Shirley Meyrick
Dave Mitchell
Colin Wall
Johanna Reames

Statutory Members

Des Hillman
David Britton
Yvonne Lewis

Voluntary/Business Members

Carole Hillman
Russell Dunham

Prospective Members

Leslie Lewis
David Dutson

Staff

Helen Madden Coordinator
Ceri Jones Community Development Officer
Adam Cox Youth Coordinator (Part-time)
Nicola Breeze Support Officer



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The implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process in Blaenau Gwent since Feb 2009 has seen dramatic improvements in multi-agency communication, but also identified a gap in provision whereby families require additional emotional support to guide them through the CAF and Team Around the Child (TAC) process.

Blainia Communities First in Partnership with Blaenau Gwent Council and in consultation with TAC, The Children and Young Peoples Partnership and all Communities First Partnerships in the borough developed the Families First Voluntary Scheme to address this gap.

Families First will recruit, train and empower volunteers throughout Blaenau Gwent to befriend and engage families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 improving the families' access to new and existing services. Families First will encompass a broad spectrum of partnership working, friendship and paternal empowerment from volunteers who will be trained in delivering high quality support. The project will see volunteers complimenting the work of both voluntary and statutory services throughout the TAC process in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families in line with the Children & Young People's Plan for Blaenau Gwent

Since presenting the project at the Communities First Conference in 2010, several other Communities First Partnerships and Local Authorities have requested details in order to replicate the project in their own areas. Interest has also been shown in highlighting the project as an example of best practice for provision bending and partnership working.

Since inception, Families First has supported 16 Families containing 33 children and has recruited 23 volunteers all of whom have been trained to university level.



Blaina Bowls Club



The original clubhouse lacked disabled access and had no female changing room or toilets. It was a popular community venue but its limited facilities were causing problems.

After consultation with club users, Blaina Communities First assisted the club to secure £207,000 of Welsh Assembly Government funding to extend the club. The project provided full disabled facilities, female changing room and toilets, new kitchen and a meeting room.

The club now boasts over 3000 users per year from a wide variety of sporting, social and community activities.

It also runs a schools inclusion program working with 100 local primary school children per year and supports a youth team through free membership.

Also with support from Blaina Communities First, the Club has become a not for profit Limited Company and now employs a full-time club steward and two part-time staff.

Blainia Community Centre



The Community Centre was originally operated by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council who had announced its closure due to budget considerations. This was a particularly severe blow for local dance clubs as the centre housed the only suitable dance floor available in the area.

Blainia Communities First worked with the centre users and other community members to form a constituted group to lease the centre from the council and take over its operation.

The centre now hosts a number of clubs and activities including 3 dance clubs, a parent and toddler group, parties, weddings and community meetings and employs 1 part-time member of staff.

A good example of how the community can participate and prevent the loss of local amenities.



William Partridge Parade



Pte. Williams Partridge took part in the famous defence of Rorke's Drift, an action immortalised in the 1964 film "Zulu". He spent his final years in Blaina and was buried in the local cemetery where his grave lay unmarked until the 1980's when his great Grandson constructed a wooden marker for the site. The Family approached Blaina Communities First for advice on erecting a permanent memorial stone and after some initial consultations it was quickly established that there was overwhelming local support to honour Pte. Partridge. Communities First arranged funding and coordinated 16 organisations to provide a parade and other activities.

600 people from as far afield as Scotland attended on the day with over 300 marching alongside the band of the Royal Welsh, family members and dignitaries. A service and plaque unveiling followed at St Peter's Church, which was filled to capacity with the service transmitted by speaker to a sizable crowd outside. The parade then made its way to Blaina Cemetery to dedicate a new permanent headstone. At an emotional graveside ceremony Beaufort choir, accompanied by the band of the Royal Welsh, sang Men of Harlech and led the singing of the British and Welsh national anthems. The last post and a gunfire salute from Martini Henry rifles, the same type as those used at Rorke's Drift, concluded the graveside ceremonies. In the evening Blaina Heritage hosted a lecture about the many aspects of the Zulu War and an exhibition of period uniform and weapons. Acting on Behalf of Communities First and the Blaina Regeneration Projects Group, the Town Mayor presented the Heritage centre with replicas of Pte. Partridge's medals and insignia and a framed print which will form the basis of a permanent display.



Rock School



Rock School began in September 2008 after a consultation for young people highlighted a lack of musical activities.

Rock School is a youth led music provision with 40 students who attend weekly sessions where they work alongside professional musicians at a working recording studio in Blaina.

The basis of the project is to enhance and develop performance skills covering vocal coaching, instrument tuition, stage performance and setting up equipment. It also encourages capacity building, teamwork, increased confidence, respect and unity, irrespective of ability, gender, culture or sexual orientation.

Since the project began, Rock School has held performance nights, with 100 plus audiences and made benefit performances, raising funds for 'Help For Hero's' and the Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Service.





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In 2006, a consortium of local community centres and community development providers were awarded funding from Communities @One to set up technical support and ICT training for community organisations and individuals in the Llanhilleth ward of Blaenau Gwent. As part of this funding, a technical officer was employed to deliver technical and web design support.

The project was a great success giving technical support to 10 community organisations and 126 individuals, with a customer survey returning a 95% satisfaction rate.

When funding was due to come to an end, it was felt that this was too valuable a service to lose and options were explored to expand the project and make it sustainable. Blaina Communities First working in partnership with community members, Llanhilleth Institute and St Illtydd's Communities First created Switch.

Switch is a social enterprise, which means that all profits from its commercial work are reinvested in the local community, not given to shareholders and all its directors are unpaid volunteers. Switch provides technical support, hardware, web design, advice and training to business and community groups.

Its main business focus has been the production of websites and installing I.T. infrastructures

Its main community focus is to increase digital inclusion and make I.T. accessible to the whole community.

Switch is joint lead partner with Blaina Communities First in delivering the E-nable project.



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Duffryn Riverwalk



Westside and Forgeside Tenants & Residents Association (WAFTRA), had received a number of complaints from its members about the condition of an area of land to the west of Duffryn Park. This area, formerly a local refuse dump, had become very overgrown and was attracting a large amount of fly-tipping which was polluting the adjacent river.

Working with Blaina Communities First, WAFTRA became a not for profit Limited Company, leased the land from the local authority and secured a £54,000 Cydcoed –Woods for All grant to clean up the area and create a riverside walk. Local schoolchildren helped to design the walk which included stone carvings of wildlife and a riddle for young children. The project was completed reusing as much on-site material as possible and has created several specialist habitats to promote biodiversity. The Riverwalk is now part of the Ebbw Fach Trail which links 13 community green spaces and heritage sites in a 16km trail.

WAFTRA's long-term plans are to extend the riverwalk, make it fully accessible to the disabled and create a butterfly meadow.

BUZZ



Cycle Hire and Repair

During an on-street consultation local young people complained about the lack of activities in the town. After some initial working with Blaina Communities First they decided to start a group based around cycling.

Since then with the support of Blaina Communities First, Buzz has attracted 46 members, elected a committee, written a constitution, applied for funding, rented a local shop front and purchased the tools and equipment to start a bike hire and repair service. The group is run by the young people themselves, adults are only involved as far as is legally necessary for banking and insurance purposes. All the repairs are carried out by MIAS trained Buzz members – the same level of qualification as Halford's technicians. The shop provides activities and training for the young people and generates an income which will be used to continue the project and fund additional youth activities. It also acts as a point of contact for outside agencies to engage with young people and build good relationships, especially the neighbourhood policing team who now regularly patrol on bikes loaned from Buzz. The group have also organised outward bound weekends, provided youth activities at local fun days and have designed their own logo and clothing range.

Their future plans are to develop a local cycle jump trail and develop Buzz as fully-fledged Social enterprise benefiting the whole community.

The group have received wide recognition for their achievements being named South Wales Echo Young Community Champions 2009, one of the O2 Community Fund's top projects and winning the Regional and National Prince's Trust Community Impact Award 2010



Green Earth



Many community groups had found that once they had raised money for environmental projects the complicated rules and regulations meant that they had to employ professional contractors to do the actual work. This removed a lot of hands-on involvement and made it very difficult to give people a sense of 'ownership' and any experience.

Green Earth was set up as a not for profit organisation which would work side by side with community members through the entire project process, especially getting their hands dirty! It is supported by Blaina Communities First Partnership which provides it with office space, admin backup, advice and networking opportunities. As a result of this relationship, 6 young people and 1 Communities First volunteer have found paid employment with Green Earth.

The project now offers an environmental consultation service, groundwork contracting, volunteer opportunities, equipment hire, and training. It also operates a community toolchest where local groups can borrow the tools and equipment they need for their projects free of charge. Green Earth firmly believes that the community should be supported to deliver their own projects with their own hands and by given the skills to maintain them in the future. They also believe in starting early and several of their school-based projects have received recognition.

Green Earth's contribution to the local environment was acknowledged with a Special Recognition Award at the 2009 Environmental Awards. From March 2011, Green Earth has been working directly with Tai Calon, Blaenau Gwent's largest provider of Social Housing making it sustainable for the foreseeable future.

Ysturuth Ladies Hall



The former Ystruth Ladies Hall had started life as a temporary demountable classroom in Crumlin, before coming to Cwmcelyn in 1986. It had far exceeded its designed lifespan and was beyond economical repair. Without a new building the clubs 70 year history would come to an end. The building was an important community resource and its replacement had been identified as a priority in local consultations. Unfortunately, with limited finances, no previous experience and an average age of 70, the Ladies were unsure how to proceed.

Blaina Communities First coordinated a £230,000 sustainability project and identified a local community group, Cwmcelyn Tenants & Residents Association, to help support the Ladies through the process. Despite unforeseen problems such as the presence of asbestos in the old building and contaminated soil on the site, the project was successfully delivered. The new hall has full disabled facilities which allows greater community use and uses 66% less energy than its predecessor reducing the hall's overheads making it far easier to sustain. The Hall also now employs 1 part-time caretaker.





Digital exclusion, especially among the over 50's and the disabled has long been recognised as a major problem in Blaenau Gwent.

Blaina Communities First are joint lead partners with Switch.uk.com to deliver the E-nable project. E-nable will be piloted in the Communities First areas of Blaina and Tredegar Central, West and Sirhowy, providing an IT tutor and access to equipment to some of the most digitally excluded members of the community. The project will be based in 10 venues which are accessible to the disabled, ranging from local libraries to sheltered housing complexes and community houses. In addition to those living in or attending the venues, Social Services will support day care services clients to attend sessions.

The focus of the project is to teach people whatever skills they want to learn, be it shopping online, using facebook or desktop publishing. There is no pressure to pursue a qualification and the project will support people from the first time they turn on a computer. E-nable will also develop computer clubs at each venue and train "Digital Buddies", community volunteers who can support learners, helping each venue to continue to offer long term opportunities.

The project is managed by a diverse partnership including Communities 2.0, Blaenau Gwent 50+ Networks, Switch.uk.com (an IT social enterprise), Tredegar Central, West & Sirhowy Communities First, Blaina Communities First, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services, Adult Education and Libraries, Tai Calon Community Housing and Linc Cymru Housing Association, Cefn Gola TARA and Waundeg TARA.

Salem Chapel



Built in 1848 at cost of £1000, Salem Baptist Chapel has always been a local landmark and occupies a prominent position on Blaina High Street. The building features a number of important architectural details, including a fine three-sided gallery, which led to it being awarded a Grade II listing.

In common with many valleys chapels an aging congregation and lower attendance made it increasingly difficult to manage the building. To prevent its closure and deterioration, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council purchased the building on the understanding that it would grant a licence for worship to continue. This is unique in Wales as the Town Council own a place of worship.

The building was then leased to the Nantyglo & Blaina Charter Group to operate a Heritage Centre.

Blaina Communities First assisted the Charter group to apply for £230,000 in funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council and the Heads of The Valleys programme to refurbish the Chapel, create an exhibition space and install disabled access.

Blaina Communities First also assisted the Charter Group to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £53,000 to create a professional exhibition and supporting website. A decision is expected in August 2011 – fingers crossed!



The Ebbw Fach Trail is an umbrella group that links together 13 community Green Spaces that offer a variety of amenities from Beaufort Hill Woodlands in the North to Llanhilleth in the south - A total of almost 16 kilometres encompassing 2 Local Nature Reserves, woodland, lakes, riverwalks and the stunning Guardian of the Valleys Memorial in Six Bells.



'Guardian' is the largest mining memorial in Wales which commemorates the 1960 Six Bells mining disaster in which 45 men and boys lost their lives in an underground gas and coal dust explosion. Costing over £200,000 the memorial now towers over 20 meters above the former Six Bells colliery site; scene of the tragedy some fifty years earlier and is dedicated to all mining communities.

The Ebbw Fach Trail Group are:
Beaufort Hill Woodlands
Parc Nant-y-Waun
Lakeside
Trevor Rowson Park
Cwmcelyn Ponds & Woodlands
Duffryn River Pathway
Roseheyworth Woodlands
Cwmtillery Lakes
The Green Walk
Ebbw River Care
Six Bells Otters
Aberbeeg River Rangers
Llanhilleth River Care Group